

INFLUENCE OF OCCUPATIONAL SOCIALIZATION ON PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS'  
INTERPRETATION AND DELIVERY OF THE TEACHING GAMES  
FOR UNDERSTANDING MODEL

by

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## ABSTRACT

Research on how preservice teachers (PTs) learn to employ the Teaching Games for Understanding (TGfU) model is in its infancy. The purpose of this study was to examine the combined impact of a package of university-based methods and the employment of the model during an early field experience (EFE) on PTs' delivery of TGfU during the teaching internship. The theoretical framework employed was occupational socialization. Participants were two PTs. Data were collected with seven qualitative techniques and analyzed using analytic induction and constant comparison. Although the PTs understood elements of TGfU, a combination of their pedagogical struggles with and misconceptions of TGfU and their prior and concurrent socialization served to mediate and reduce the impact of their initial training. Consequently, neither PT was able to deliver the full version of TGfU during the internship. The study suggested that faculty training PTs focus on a number of areas including recruiting teaching-oriented PTs, emphasizing the model's origins in sport, contrasting TGfU and traditional pedagogies, debunking the idea that TGfU and foundational pedagogies are oppositional, providing a graded series of EFEs, teaching within small-sided games, and identifying tactical problems.

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A general dissatisfaction with the traditional multi-activity (MA) method of teaching games and sports due to its overemphasis of skill and technical mastery and consequent overreliance on direct teaching styles, relative neglect of strategies and tactics, isolated skill drill/practice-to-game progression, lack of authenticity and relevance (Hastie, 2003), and, in the United States, its poor delivery and failure to promote learning (see Curtner-Smith & Sofo, 2004; Ennis, 1996; Hastie & Curtner-Smith, 2006; Locke, 1992), led to the development of several new physical education (PE) curriculum models for teaching games, one of which was games for understanding in England in the early 1980s (Bunker & Thorpe, 1982; Kirk, 1983; Thorpe, 1992; Thorpe & Bunker, 1982). In the intervening years, as academics in different parts of the world have experimented with, studied, commercialized, and, perhaps, overly complicated the model, it has been given a variety of pseudonyms including game-centered games (Waring & Almond, 1995), a games concept approach (McNeill et al., 2004), game sense (Light & Robert, 2010), and play practice (Holt, Ward, & Wallhead, 2006; Launder, 2001). More often, however, the name given to the model in most circles has been teaching games for understanding (TGfU).

The goals of TGfU are that students gain technical competence but also learn why and when skills should be executed in games (Bunker & Thorpe, 1982; Turner & Martinek, 1995). Moreover, and in contrast to MA teaching, when employing the TGfU model, teachers attempt to develop technique and skill after students have gained a sound comprehension of a game's strategies and tactics (Bunker & Thorpe). This is achieved through a constructivist pedagogy (Dyson, Griffin, & Hastie, 2004; Kirk & Macdonald, 1998) which appears to have been developed from a

combination of PE teacher education (PETE) professors' knowledge of spectrum theory (Mosston & Ashworth, 2002, 2008) (particularly the productive or indirect cluster of styles which can be used to shift decision-making and responsibility from teachers to students), pressure from politicians to produce improved elite sporting teams, and students' pleas to "play the game" (Hastie & Curtner-Smith, 2006).

For Bunker and Thorpe (1982) and Holt, Streat, and Bengoechea (2002), TGfU involves teachers following a 5-stage process in which they focus on game appreciation, tactical awareness, decision-making, skill execution, and performance. Within these stages, four pedagogical principles are employed (Thorpe, Bunker, & Almond, 1984). First, a variety of game types are *sampled* from one of the several classification systems that have been developed (e.g., Ellis, 1983; Werner & Almond, 1990; Werner, Thorpe, & Bunker, 1996). Second, games are *modified*, in terms of numbers of players, rules, playing area configurations, and equipment so that they can be played by children but continue to *represent* the more complicated adult forms of the games. Third, games are also modified in order to *exaggerate* tactical problems. Finally, the *tactical complexity* within different game types is emphasized. For some, this final stage is partially achieved through inviting students to invent their own games within given categories (Almond, 1983; Curtner-Smith, 1996; Hastie & Curtner-Smith, 2006; Jackson, 1986; Smith & Witt, 1990).

Similarly, Griffin, Mitchell, and Oslin (1997) suggested that teachers follow a 3-stage process. In Stage 1, students are required to take part in modified games that are conditioned so that specific tactical problems are highlighted. Within Stage 2, students are questioned so that they become tactically aware. Finally, in Stage 3, teachers design game-like exercises which force students to solve tactical problems through skill execution.

Bunker and Thorpe (1982), Holt et al. (2002), and Griffin et al. (1997) suggested teachers move through their stages in a strict and linear order. In practice, however, there is some evidence to suggest that teachers' TGfU pedagogies are much more flexible (Hastie & Curtner-Smith, 2006). In addition, for many advocates of the model, the supreme importance of tactical and strategic understanding means that technical skills are only taught in isolation as a last resort if they cannot possibly be taught within small-sided and conditioned games. By contrast, others have suggested that having this kind of antagonistic view (i.e., skills versus strategies/tactics) is a mistake and that skill, tactical, and strategic learning should be viewed and taught interdependently (Kirk & MacPhail, 2002).

### **Research on Learning to Teach TGfU**

To date, there has been relatively little research on how preservice teachers (PTs) learn to teach through TGfU. Some of the work that has been completed (Curtner-Smith et al., 2007; McNeill et al., 2004; Peters & Shuck, 2009; Randall, 2003) indicates that PETE faculties have employed packages of methods to teach the model to their charges. These methods have included reading articles about and discussing the model, teaching PTs' content courses using the model, peer-teaching within methods classes, requiring PTs to design games and plan TGfU units, and providing PTs with a TGfU lesson plan template.

Results of this research, however, suggest that PTs have struggled to master the model. Perhaps this is not surprising given the general view that much time, practice, and considerable pedagogical skill are needed to employ TGfU pedagogies with any success (Hastie & Curtner-Smith, 2006; Smith, 1992; Werner et al., 1996).

Specifically, PTs have had difficulty with the relative fluidity and flexibility of TGfU pedagogy (especially "reading" their students' needs), planning, using indirect teaching styles

(particularly questioning students), and teaching within small-sided and conditioned games. Furthermore, they have worried about students' skill levels and prioritized them over understanding how to play games. In addition, they have been concerned about students' abilities to understand tactics and strategies and create games. Moreover, PTs have been concerned about their own mastery of foundational instructional skills (i.e., effective teaching and managerial behaviors) while, at the same time, trying to utilize and learn more advanced TGfU pedagogies.

Factors contributing to these difficulties have included PTs' lack of pedagogical content, and pedagogical content knowledge. During the culminating teaching internship, the lack of time, facilities, and equipment; the low level of cooperating teacher (CT) support; the subject's marginalization; large class sizes; and unpredictable class scheduling have also proven to be significant constraints on PTs learning the TGfU model. In addition, PTs have been hindered by the resistance of students used to being taught through traditional skill practice-to-game and direct pedagogies focused on skill or fitness development or not being "taught" at all.

PTs' prior experiences of more traditional and direct PE teaching and curricula have also made it difficult for them to learn the TGfU model and led to faulty conceptions of the model. Specifically, they appear to have misconceived the model in three broad ways (McNeill et al., 2004). In the first, PTs have believed that they are doing TGfU correctly if they follow and stick rigidly with the stages outlined by academics (e.g., Griffin et al. 1997) regardless of whether or not students learn. In the second, they have continued to value technical skill development over learning how to play and consequently adapt the TGfU pedagogy to realize this goal or abandon it altogether. In the third, they have merely seen the TGfU approach as a good way to keep students engaged and well-behaved without really emphasizing learning. On the upside, and as yet, the fears of Chandler and Mitchell (1990) that teachers might misconceive the model and

mistakenly reduce it to an explanation of strategies and tactics followed by unsupervised game-playing has not been observed among PTs.

### **Purpose and Theoretical Framework**

The small amount of research previously conducted on PTs learning to employ the TGfU model has focused on the effects of a single methods course on PTs' ability to teach TGfU during an early field experience (EFE) (Curtner-Smith et al., 2007) or a package of university-based methods (i.e., excluding field-based practice) on PTs' ability to teach TGfU during their culminating teaching internship (McNeill et al., 2004). The purpose of the current study, therefore, was to examine the combined impact of a package of university-based methods and employing the model during an earlier EFE on PTs' delivery of TGfU during the teaching internship. Given that previous studies (Curtner-Smith, Hastie, & Kinchin, 2008; Curtner-Smith & Sofo, 2004; McNeill et al.; Sofo & Curtner-Smith, 2010; Stran & Curtner-Smith, 2009) have revealed how PTs' "reading" (Gore, 1990) of curricula is heavily influenced by their occupational socialization; data collection and analysis in the study were also guided by this theoretical framework.

### **Occupational Socialization**

Defined by Lawson (1986) as "all kinds of socialization that initially influence persons to enter the field of physical education and later are responsible for their perceptions and actions as . . . teachers" (p. 107), occupational socialization has been a useful theoretical framework through which to understand why teachers think and act as they do (e.g., see Lawson, 1983a, 1983b, Schempp & Graber, 1992; Stran & Curtner-Smith, 2009; Templin & Schempp, 1989). PTs' conceptions of PE and actual pedagogies are influenced by two forms of socialization—*acculturation* and *professional socialization*.

Before they begin PETE, PTs' conceptions of the subject are honed by the contexts and cultures in which they exist and persons in positions of influence. This process of acculturation and PTs' initial interest in PE as a career are often triggered by a strong interest in sport (Evans & Williams, 1989; Macdonald, Kirk, & Braiuka, 1999) which is nurtured by physically active parents (McGuire & Collins, 1998; Woolger & Power, 1993). Key influences on prospective PTs' beliefs and values about teaching are their own experiences of school PE, extracurricular school sport, and sport outside the school context as well as their relationships with their own PE teachers and coaches (Curtner-Smith, 1999; Green, 1998). Prospective PTs, then, learn what it is to be a teacher through what has been termed an "apprenticeship of observation" (Lortie, 1975). If this apprenticeship involves participating in non-competitive physical activity, less traditional competitive sport or a relatively low standard of traditional sport, and working with teachers and coaches who give priority to good quality PE over producing high-level extracurricular sporting teams, PTs are likely to enter PETE with "teaching orientations" and view coaching as a "career contingency." In contrast, if the apprenticeship involves participating in a relatively high standard of traditional sport and working with teachers and coaches who emphasize extracurricular sport over PE, then PTs are likely to enter PETE with a "coaching orientation" and view teaching PE as a career contingency (Lawson, 1983a, 1983b).

Professional socialization refers to the impact of PETE on PTs (Lawson, 1983a). This impact is often minimal and fails to change the conceptions of PE with which PTs enter their programs (Curtner-Smith, 1999; Evans, 1992; Evans, Davies, & Penney, 1996; Placek et al., 1995). PTs who enter PETE with strong coaching orientations have been shown to be especially resistant to professional socialization (Sofa & Curtner-Smith, 2010). Moreover, weak teacher education can serve to strengthen the faulty conceptions of some PTs (Doolittle, Dodds, &

Placek, 1993). Conversely, strong PETE has been shown to have a positive influence on all but the most hardened coaching-oriented PTs (Curtner-Smith, 1997, 2001). This type of PETE includes faculty with specialist training in sport pedagogy who are viewed as credible by PTs. These faculty supervise EFEs closely, agree on a “shared technical culture” (i.e., the skills and knowledge required for teaching effectively) (Lortie, 1975) and tackle PTs’ faulty beliefs about the subject head on.

In line with occupational socialization theory, previous research (Curtner-Smith et al., 2008) has indicated that when PTs with teaching orientations graduate, they are much more likely to deliver the “full version” of another innovative and constructivist curriculum model, sport education (SE). Conversely, those with coaching orientations are more likely to misconceive SE and “water it down” or to take a “cafeteria approach” by selecting aspects of the model to employ within traditional MA instruction. Given these results and the finding that American PTs with strong coaching orientations had more difficulty teaching through TGfU during an EFE than those with teaching orientations (Curtner-Smith et al., 2007), it seems likely that PTs with coaching orientations will also struggle with TGfU to a greater extent than those with teaching orientations during the teaching internship. Contradicting this hypothesis was the finding of McNeill et al. (2004) that Singaporean student teachers with a higher levels of games playing experience did better with TGfU than those who were relatively inexperienced sportsmen and women.

## **Methods**

### **Participants**

Two PTs, Emily<sup>1</sup> and Kenny, enrolled in their culminating teaching internship within a university situated in the southeastern United States, were the participants in this study. Both Emily and Kenny were aged 22 years, Caucasian, and born and raised in the southeastern United

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<sup>1</sup> The names of all participants in this study are fictitious.

States. They were selected for the study because they had done well in previous coursework but had different orientations to teaching and coaching. In congruence with the university's institutional review board policy on human subjects, both PTs signed consent forms before the study began.

### **PTs' Prior Training in TGfU**

Both PTs were introduced to TGfU during their initial secondary methods course through class explanation/discussion, participating in 12 TGfU lessons as "students," and peer teaching 4 lessons. Further discussion and peer teaching (six lessons) of the model took place during the PTs' elementary methods class. In addition, during the elementary methods course, the PTs read a number of articles and a leading text (Mitchell, Oslin, & Griffin, 2006) describing the model in some detail, designed small-sided and conditioned games, and planned an 18-lesson TGfU unit. The template for this unit was supplied by the course instructor. PTs were required to write individual lesson plans from this unit plan. Finally, the PTs taught the 18-lesson unit to second and third grade students within classes of 8 to 12 students during the elementary EFE aligned to the elementary methods course.

### **Setting**

PTs taught at different elementary schools for 7 weeks. Emily's school catered to children in pre-kindergarten to fifth grade aged 5 to 11 years. Most were African American and from lower socioeconomic status backgrounds. Emily taught 9-lesson speedball and 6-lesson ultimate frisbee TGfU units to 1 third grade, 1 fourth grade and 1 fifth grade class for a total of 45 TGfU lessons. Her class sizes ranged from 61 to 73 students; therefore she had the support of a teaching aid and the cooperating teacher.

Kenny completed his elementary teaching internship at a predominantly lower- to middle-class school which catered to both Caucasian (69%) and African American (31%) children in third through fifth grade. He taught TGfU units to 3 third grade (60 lessons) and 3 fourth grade (60 lessons) classes. Both units comprised a series of mini-units on ultimate frisbee (four lessons), lascoop (an invasion game using scoops and a ball) (four lessons), rounders (four lessons), cricket (four lessons), and soccer (four lessons). His class sizes ranged from 40 to 50 students. Kenny also had some assistance from his cooperating teacher.

### **Data Collection**

Seven techniques were used to collect data with the goals of describing how the PTs interpreted and delivered TGfU and explaining how their acculturation and professional socialization influenced this interpretation and delivery. *Non-participant observation* involved extensive field notes being written on the pedagogies employed by Emily (during 19 lessons) and Kenny (during 19 lessons) while employing the TGfU model. *Document analyses* of PTs' teaching portfolios were conducted during and at the end of the internship. During these analyses, the focus was on PTs' TGfU unit and lesson plans, evaluations of students, and other materials they had developed during the teaching of their TGfU units. PTs were also asked to provide at least one entry per week in a *reflective journal* during which they discussed anything they deemed pertinent about their teaching of TGfU. Similarly, they were asked to complete at least one *critical incident report* per week in which they described a specific and significant event that had occurred during their TGfU teaching. Three types of interviews were utilized during the study. First, *formal semi-structured interviews* (Patton, 1990) were conducted with each PT at the beginning, middle, and end of the internship. In the initial interview, PTs were asked about their acculturation, professional socialization, and general understanding of the

TGfU model. In the second and third interviews, the focus was on their understanding of the various stages that could be involved in TGfU teaching and their own use of the TGfU model. All six interviews were audiotaped and transcribed verbatim. Second, whenever there was an opportunity, PTs were *informally interviewed*. Detailed written notes on the contents of these interviews were made as soon after informal interviews as possible. Finally, one *stimulated recall interview* was carried out with each PT. On each occasion, this involved PTs viewing a filmed lesson from one of their units. These films were paused periodically so that PTs could describe the thought processes that resulted in particular actions.

### **Data Analysis**

Data were analyzed using standard interpretive techniques. Initially, data indicating how the PTs interpreted and delivered TGfU and how their acculturation and professional socialization influenced this interpretation and delivery were identified. The two sets of data were then coded into categories and sub-categories and collapsed into themes by employing analytic induction and constant comparison (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984). Trustworthiness and credibility were established by triangulating findings from the various data sources and searching for negative and discrepant cases (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984).

## **Findings and Discussion**

### **Interpretation and Delivery of TGfU**

**Comprehension of the model.** Although both PTs revealed that they understood elements of the TGfU model, data indicated that, in general and in congruence with the participants in previous studies (Curtner-Smith et al., 2007; McNeill et al., 2004; Peters & Shuck, 2009; Randall, 2003), they misunderstood and misconceived it. As illustrated by the following data extracts, their ideas on how to implement the model were vague at best:

I would introduce the sport real quickly and just go over a few rules and then we would just basically have them . . . divide up in teams to go out and play for like 10 to 15 minutes. And then you would come back and you would basically have a practice . . . go back to game play and continually just doing that and eventually having a full game. But your first time, it's modified and you do skills modified and keep adding more skills along the game and eventually you would want a full-sized game. (Emily, formal interview 1)

You explain the game to them and how it works, and how to play, but then you let them automatically start playing, and you kind of want them to start figuring things out on their own . . . and you let them practice . . . then you go back to playing again after you . . . see if they can come up with a strategy . . . or start to make them think more about the game. (Kenny, formal interview 1)

In terms of the stages of the model advocated by Bunker and Thorpe (1982) and Holt et al. (2002) and during their methods courses, and as illustrated in the data excerpts below, both PTs frequently mentioned tactical awareness, skill execution, and performance:

I probably should have done a better job with the strategies and tactics. . . . I spent a lot of time the first couple weeks on kicking, throwing, and passing, where it was pretty easy to do. . . . I could have spent a little more time and been like, "OK in this situation when this person is guarding you, what should you do?" (Emily, formal interview 2)

I felt like I struggled with the practice time. I always felt rushed and didn't really take my time to demonstrate the certain skill for that day. My supervisor even told me to make sure I take my time on the practice time because this is where the students will actually learn the skill and be able to apply it in a real game situation. (Emily, reflective journal, week 1, speedball unit, grades 3-5)

Most of the practices were more on skills. . . . Once I got here I noticed a lot of the students were not up to the skill level I thought they were. . . . I would try to help them with the skills, but then during the game I would keep helping them with the rules. (Kenny, formal interview 2)

There was, however, no significant emphasis of game appreciation or students making decisions within games. Moreover, both PTs continued to prioritize technical competence over tactical and strategic understanding:

Emily stops the students to explain the practice. The students gather behind their team cones. . . . She refers to the practice from the previous day on throwing and catching a frisbee. . . . She asks, "What finger is on top?" . . . "What on the bottom?" . . . "Remember to step with the same foot toward your partner." . . . "How do we catch?" . . . "Like an

alligator.” . . . She then sends students to practice with a partner with the option of using a foam or hard frisbee. (Emily, field notes, lesson 2, ultimate frisbee unit, grade 4)

Similarly, and in line with the thoughts of Thorpe et al. (1984) and Griffin et al. (1997) on pedagogical principles and the model’s curricular scaffolding, there were plenty of references to “modified” and “small-sided” games and the sampling of “different” types of games as the data extracts below illustrate:

The most significant incident was when I had to modify the ball/frisbee to make the students more successful. . . . I had to modify the goals of lascoop and make them bigger so they could score more frequently. . . . I modified the game of cricket by letting them hit off a tee because they could not throw [i.e., bowl] the ball. (Kenny, critical incident reports, week 2-4)

I was nervous at first because on the first day I had 12 different fields for 12 teams so they could play 3 v. 3. . . . It looked like chaos inside, but then [Leslie] mentioned it was key for the students to be active but safe. . . . She helped me put them on four fields. (Emily, formal interview 2)

They played some games they had never played before so it kind of took them a day or two to finally get the rules and how everything works. . . . I did a variety . . . two invasion games and then two fielding games. . . . I was going to do a target game but . . . I swapped it back to soccer. (Kenny, formal interview 2)

Conversely, there was no mention of teachers modifying or conditioning games for the purpose of emphasizing specific tactical problems, questioning students with the goal of helping them become more tactically aware, or setting tactical problems for students solve. In short, both PTs appeared to have a rudimentary and limited understanding of the more basic pedagogies associated with TGfU and none whatsoever of those pedagogies that are more complex.

**Structure of the model.** Not surprisingly, their limited and shallow understanding of the model led to Emily and Kenny delivering units of instruction that, in Curtner-Smith et al.’s (2008) parlance, fell short of the full version of TGfU. Specifically, Kenny took a cafeteria approach to the model and Emily watered it down.

Kenny's version of TGfU essentially involved taking a fairly traditional skill practice-to-game MA approach with a few more small-sided games included on the path to the full game than would normally be expected. Emily was more likely to teach through small-sided and conditioned games, less likely to include isolated skill drills, and occasionally attempted to teach skills within game contexts. Like Kenny, however, her focus was still very traditional. Both emphases are portrayed in the data extracts below:

Emily assigns students to their fields. . . . While students are playing she provides motivational and performance feedback. . . . She blows the whistle to stop class play. . . . She says, "I just saw a team do an awesome play!". . . . Students reenact what they had just done (three passes among teammates to score). . . . Emily then asks the students, "Where were the players and their teammates?". . . . "What type of passes were they?". . . . She then reemphasizes moving to an open space on offense and executing short, quick passes by asking students, "Why do these strategies work so well?". . . . Emily then blows the whistle to restart game play. (Emily, field notes, lesson 8, speedball unit, grade 5)

Kenny has students get behind a designated coned area with their team color. . . . Students are assigned to designated areas to play one another. . . . Teams start playing . . . . There are 6-7 players per team all playing at the same time on a quarter of the gym space. . . . Kenny organizes two teams on the last court in their straight lines (9 players on each side). They are to practice tossing back and forth and rotating to the end of the line. . . . He then organizes the teams to play again. (Kenny, field notes, lesson 4, lascoop unit, grade 3)

**Pedagogies employed within the model.** Despite a considerable emphasis in their methods courses on using indirect teaching styles from Mosston and Ashworth's (2008) spectrum within TGfU units, as portrayed in the following two field note excerpts, both PTs' pedagogies were predominantly direct and featured practice style teaching:

Emily blows the whistle and stops students involved in game play. She then has students get back into their team lines as she prepares to present a practice task (throwing a frisbee). She chooses a student to help demonstrate the proper technique of throwing and catching a frisbee. Students then find a partner and start practicing. Emily monitors students and provides motivational and performance feedback. (Emily, field notes, lesson 1, ultimate frisbee unit, grade 5)

Kenny has students get behind a designated coned area with their team color. . . . Students are then assigned to designated areas to play one another. . . . He approaches a

student and says, “This is how you want to bat.” . . . He then shows the proper stance and fixes the student’s feet. . . . He then says, “You want to hit it away from her, and you hit it right to her.”. . . He then shouts to the rest of the children, “Hit away from the pitcher.” [Kenny, field notes, lesson 1, cricket unit, grade 3]

Informal and stimulated recall interviews also revealed that PTs were focused on using a repertoire of effective teaching behaviors with particular emphasis on “establishing rules, routines, and expectations,” creating momentum and flow, providing optimal levels of “engaged skill learning time” and adequate “performance” and “motivational feedback,” Further, Kenny was particularly keen that his students were well “organized” and Emily put a premium on students “really listening” to her.

In direct contrast to the requirements of the model, both PTs also revealed a lack of flexibility in their teaching. Again, Kenny was the worst offender in this regard. Observations indicated that both PTs usually followed their original lesson plans faithfully and were not willing or able to make alterations based on students’ needs. The rigidity in their thinking was also apparent in their stimulated recall interviews:

I spent a lot of time on my lesson plans to make sure I was as organized and as prepared as possible, so I pretty much just stuck to those. I tried to make sure I didn't stray from them too much. (Emily, stimulated recall interview)

Finally PTs also found it “difficult” to “identify tactical issues” on which to focus, to ask questions about tactics and strategies, and to teach within game play. Lesson plans were for the most part devoid of tactical problems to be examined and example lead questions on tactics and strategies to be asked. Since both PTs were excessively plan-dependent and inflexible, this meant that they rarely focused on a major tactical issue within their classes. As Emily admitted in her stimulated recall interview, she “should have done a better job with the strategies and tactics” because the focus on skills was essentially “pretty easy to do.” For the majority of the PTs’ internships, most questions that were included in lesson plans or actually asked during lessons

were either skill- (“When you kick, should you use the inside or outside part of your foot?”) or rule-focused (“What does every game start off with?”). Toward the end of her internship, however, Emily did start to plan and ask some tactical questions (“What do you think you are supposed to do with more players in this situation?”). Unfortunately, if students were unable to answer her initial question, Emily did not possess the ability to ask a follow-up question that was simplified or modified.

Both PTs were also relatively quiet during the game play segments of their lessons compared to any isolated skill practices they organized within which they provided liberal amounts of performance and motivational feedback. Emily was the more engaged of the two PTs within game play segments but her interaction with the students was usually aimed at motivating them (“nice pass [Dameon]! Did you all notice how he looked for the open player?”) and during her stimulated recall interview she relayed that she “felt that [she] spent more time correcting the rules than [providing] actual feedback about the performance and decisions made.” Kenny’s level of interaction with his students during game play segments was low at the beginning of his internship and “tailed off” to the point that it was virtually non-existent. The rationale for this pattern of behavior, provided in his stimulated recall interview, was that he had come to the realization that his students “just needed to play, so they would figure it out.”

### **Factors Influencing PTs’ Interpretation and Delivery of TGfU**

**Acculturation.** Two key elements of the PTs’ acculturation appeared to be partially responsible for the orientations with which they entered PETE and the ways in which they interpreted and delivered TGfU units during their teaching internships. These were their involvement in conservative forms of sport and their own schooling.

***Involvement in conservative forms of sport.*** In congruence with many other PTs (Curtner-Smith et al. 2008; Stran & Curtner-Smith, 2010), Emily and Kenny were initially

attracted to careers in PE based on their “love” of children and their early, continued, and, for the most part, positive involvement in physical activity and sport both inside and outside the school setting:

I love kids and I love being active. . . . I was always active in sport and physical activity when I grew up. . . . I think it is important to share with kids how to start out young and being active and healthy throughout their lives. (Emily, informal interview)

I played lots of sports growing up. . . . I just like working with kids and I felt that PE was my strong suit . . . since I can’t play anymore. PE was a way to still keep up with my love of sports. (Kenny, formal interview 1)

This involvement was nurtured by parents and siblings who “loved to do all things [sporting] together” (Emily) and for whom participation “ran in the family” (Kenny).

Having played a variety of organized youth sports in her early childhood, Emily specialized first in soccer which she “had played [her] whole life” and “then basketball.” In high school, however, initially she focused on cross country before returning to basketball and soccer. In addition, after practicing soccer “first with the whole team” she worked on her track skills “to finish that day.” As a child, Kenny participated in organized sport within “recreation leagues.” For example, he recalled that at “about 4 [he started] playing baseball, basketball, and football.” During his early adolescence, he continued to play traditional team games, both inside and outside of school, but in high school he “just did baseball.” This focus and Kenny’s athletic ability led to him to him “playing baseball for 2 years” at a local community college.

The fact that Emily and Kenny spent their childhood and youth participating mainly in “traditional” sports that were “coach-controlled” guaranteed that they made few decisions about tactics or strategies themselves. To the contrary, they learned that coaches made decisions and players played. Since Kenny had participated in the major male American team sports and at a higher level than Emily, his experiences, in this sense, were more extreme. It was, then, not

surprising that both he and Emily found it difficult to let their own students make tactical and strategic decisions in PE lessons.

*PTs' own schooling.* The PTs' apprenticeship of observation within their own school PE also influenced their future career and pedagogical choices. Although their elementary teachers used "direct styles of teaching" and were "very traditional," both Emily and Kenny rated them as "great" and "good" because they "kept children active the whole time and always taught different games" (Emily), "didn't have free play" and "had certain things [they] had to do" which included a "fitness unit each year [for] which [students] got rewarded for reaching fitness goals" (Kenny). Moreover, and as illustrated by the following data snippets, both PTs decided to train to be PE teachers partly based on the modeling that these elementary teachers provided:

It was all because of my elementary teacher. . . . She was so great. She kept us active the whole time, we never sat down, and we were always playing. She always taught us different games. . . . I just loved her and just loved PE. . . . From elementary on, I just wanted to be a PE teacher. (Emily, formal interview 1)

My mom was my elementary PE teacher. . . . She had an influence in my decision to teach PE. . . . I just like working with kids and I felt that physical education was my strong suit out of all the other subjects. (Kenny, formal interview 1)

While the pedagogies modeled by their elementary teachers had something of a positive impact on Emily and Kenny despite running counter to what was required within TGfU, those of their middle and high school PE teachers had a neutral or negative impact. This was because both PTs experienced non-teaching middle school PE teachers who "rolled out the ball" and would "help [students] with basketball, because that's all she cared about" (Emily) and "pretty much [supervised] free play, everyday" (Kenny). In addition, their high school teachers had strong coaching orientations and so allowed Emily and Kenny to bypass their (admittedly weak) PE programs and, ironically, use the time to train for their extra-curricular sports instead with a specific focus on honing their "techniques and strategies."

***Orientations to teaching and coaching.*** Both PTs' acculturation was conservative and similar. However, because Emily's elementary PE teacher had such a big impact on her and Kenny was relatively successful in a very traditional form of sport, Emily entered PETE with a teaching orientation and clearly viewed coaching as a career contingency, while Kenny entered the same program with a "moderate coaching orientation" (Curtner-Smith et al., 2008) which meant he was still open to teaching curricular PE "properly" even if it was not his priority. These two perspectives were still intact at the time of the study:

I feel like I have a strong voice and strong opinion about teaching. . . . I am very organized and I feel that a teacher needs to have a plan and follow through with that plan every day. . . . I want students to understand what they are doing, why they are doing it, and how to do it the correct way. (Emily, formal interview 1)

My first career choice is to be a teacher . . . and I know a lot of schools around here . . . need help because . . . I've talked to a lot of people. . . . They have said . . . if you ever get this job, in an interview, say you would be able to help out and coach . . . and that's when I would step in. (Kenny, formal interview 2)

Moreover, these teaching and coaching perspectives had served to filter the messages received by the two PTs about TGfU during their PETE and continued to influence their teaching of it during their internships.

**Professional Socialization.** The PTs' TGfU-PETE contradicted and competed with their prior socialization. Due to his more conservative acculturation and the fact that he entered the program with a coaching orientation, the contradiction and competition of the TGfU model with what Kenny considered to be "good" PE pedagogy was much greater than it was for Emily with her teaching orientation.

***Influence of PTs' TGFU-PETE prior to the teaching internship.*** Both PTs were generally complimentary about the package of strategies, methods, and experiences the faculty had put together and which comprised the TGfU-PETE they had received prior to their teaching

internships. Emily was particularly positive about the “articles about different sports and rules” that had been provided for PTs online and the “book [Mitchell et al., 2006] that gave you a bunch of ideas for games for understanding.” Similarly, Kenny noted that he often referred to “sample” games in the textbook, “but [that] a lot of time [he had] used the internet trying to find interesting games that kids [had never] played before.” By contrast, Emily lamented that there had only been one EFE focused on TGfU and Kenny explained that it was difficult trying to teach large classes using TGfU during his internship because he had only taught relatively small classes during the TGfU EFE:

I would have liked better to actually teach more because I feel like for one of the classes we were in there for so long just learning all these games which was helpful, but it was too long of a time to spend in a classroom. We could have quickly gone over it . . . and sent us off. So, I feel like I didn’t have enough time to incorporate all those games I learned into my teaching. (Emily, formal interview 1)

I think it [i.e., the TGfU EFE] is mainly focused on the small classes. . . . When I’m teaching 10 kids and there is enough equipment for . . . 10 kids . . . but when I have 50 you start to think about . . . am I going to have enough [equipment] and trying to keep as many people as I can active for most of the period of time. (Kenny, formal interview 1)

Importantly, both PTs also indicated that they saw a contradiction and contrast between the direct nature, control, and safety of the foundational pedagogies (i.e., behaviors based on the research on effective instruction and management) they were being taught, and the indirect nature, relative lack of control, and risk involved with employing TGfU:

I’m a little hesitant about teaching TGfU. . . . I mean we have only done it with about 10 kids and now I’m going to be teaching 70 or so. . . . It might be kind of chaotic at first and I might be more comfortable with skill themes. (Emily, formal interview 1)

I think it’s easier to supervise when they [i.e., the students] are only on three fields. . . . I am the only teacher out here. . . . It makes monitoring a lot easier. . . . I don’t really want to break the kids up in to more fields [to do TGfU small-sided games] because I think it will be more hectic. (Kenny, informal interview, lesson 4, ultimate frisbee unit)

*Teaching internship.* Several elements of the teaching internship had a pronounced influence on the degree of success the PTs achieved when implementing their TGfU units. In line with previous socialization research (Curtner-Smith et al., 2007, 2008; Stran & Curtner-Smith, 2010), these were facilities and equipment, cooperating teachers, students and class size, curricular disruptions, and coaching duties. In general, and as alluded to in previous sections of this paper, these elements had a positive impact on Emily's teaching and a negative impact on Kenny's instruction.

*Facilities and equipment.* Emily had access to "a good-sized gym" and "a lot of field space." Moreover, as she often noted within her reflective journal and critical incident reports, she had "plenty of equipment for students . . . especially during the practice." In contrast, Kenny taught on the outfield of a baseball field and "struggled" when he taught "inside on half of the gym for 50 kids." Moreover, Kenny was hampered by a lack of equipment. Despite these "situational constraints" (Hargreaves, 1984), Kenny optimistically noted that he had "always said, ya know, you can make do with what you have, even if you don't have a lot. . . . I try to keep as many students as I can physically active."

*Cooperating teachers.* The cooperating teachers that supervised Emily (Leslie) and Kenny (Vaughn) had both been through the same PETE program as the PTs and were in the same cohort 19 years prior to the study. At this stage in their careers, however, Leslie possessed a strong teaching orientation whereas Vaughn, who was also the head football coach at the local high school, was coaching oriented. Not surprisingly, this meant that Emily received more support for her teaching than Kenny, particularly when it came to "helpful ways of going about teaching a large group of students . . . making sure lessons [were] safe and that students [were] constantly being active." Moreover, Vaughn was not nearly as structured as Leslie and,

consequently, conditions for Kenny's teaching were less favorable. In addition, Vaughn seemed more interested in helping Kenny move into an extracurricular coaching role than in improving his teaching and was quick to voice his approval of Kenny coaching baseball at a local middle school at the same time he was completing his internship as it would help him "get his foot in the door." Vaughn also noted that during his training TGfU "was different than what it is now . . . this play, practice, play stuff. What's that?" Despite this drawback, Vaughn was often observed providing Kenny with managerial tips and help with particularly difficult students. He also provided specific feedback about his teaching of TGfU. For example, in one written lesson evaluation, he suggested that Kenny "continue [his] monitoring pattern . . . provide feedback and promote class discussion (what happens if? . . . Where do you kick?)." Finally, Vaughn was certainly aware of the main issues Kenny was having with the model and confided that he didn't "know why [Kenny] doesn't do more small-sided games . . . he is still scared to play."

*Students.* The children in Emily's and Kenny's classes also had a profound influence on the PTs' ability to employ the TGfU model. Although her class sizes were larger than Kenny's, Emily's students were relatively well-behaved and enthusiastic and so allowed her to experiment with the model with some confidence:

Students are very attentive while Emily tells them which team will be playing one another. . . . Students are anxious to begin playing the game. . . . When a ball is hit too high through the goal (a rule Emily established for safety purposes), students look around to see if she saw because it was "accidental" and don't want to sit out . . . Students who are substitutes are highly engaged and cheer for their teammates as they wait their turn. (Emily, field notes, lesson 6, speedball unit, grade 5)

In contrast, Kenny's students were often poorly behaved and, understandably, made him wary of using the indirect teaching styles called for when working within TGfU. Moreover, they frequently resisted his attempts at using the model:

Kenny assigns students to their designated fields. Teams consist of 6 to 8 students. . . . He asks certain teams to begin playing, but they are unorganized. . . . Exasperated, Kenny says, “Y’all are trying to stop them from scoring. . . . I told you several times . . . you have to pass it. . . .” Two girls on the first field get bored because no one is passing them the ball and choose to sit down by the fence. . . . Other students are arguing with Kenny about who has possession of the ball. (Kenny, field notes, lesson 2, ultimate frisbee unit, grade 3)

Finally, both PTs also expressed their concern about their students’ relative lack of skill and experience in the activities they were teaching and were skeptical about their ability to comprehend and use anything more than the most straightforward tactics and strategies:

The ultimate frisbee unit was a little more difficult just in the fact that throwing and catching the frisbee was harder for them to do. . . . We had already done the speedball unit and they knew how to move to open spaces. . . . I had to spend more time focusing on the basic skill with the actual frisbee. (Emily, formal interview 3)

The students don’t have the skill level I thought they would coming in to this. . . . I have broken down the practices into basic stuff, especially for the third graders. . . . I would normally just do skill themes with these kids, but I see this as a challenge for myself to stick with the games for understanding. (Kenny, informal interview, ultimate frisbee unit)

*Curricular distractions.* Emily’s teaching time was fiercely protected by Leslie.

Consequently, her lessons were rarely disturbed and she was forced to change plans infrequently. By contrast, Kenny faced a multitude of interruptions to his lessons from “messengers” and “students who weren’t in the correct group” and was frequently required to alter his plans due to “PTO meetings, “school assemblies,” “gifted programs,” and “field trips.”

*Extracurricular coaching duties.* Emily did not coach extracurricular sport during her internship because she felt that her “student teaching would consume most of [her] time and didn’t want it to interfere with [her] teaching.” As alluded to above, and in congruence with his coaching orientation, Kenny, however, decided to coach baseball. The considerable time and effort he put into this venture obviously took a toll on his teaching of TGfU. For example, his university supervisor noted that “he just taught whatever was in his mind, which didn’t follow

his lesson plans. I think coaching after school and having late games during the week kind of got in the way.”

### **Summary and Implications for Practice**

The purpose of the study described in this paper was to examine the impact of a package of methods and experiences that comprised one TGfU-PETE program on two PTs’ delivery of TGfU during their subsequent teaching internship. Findings indicated that although the PTs understood elements of the model, the combination of their pedagogical struggles with and misconceptions of TGfU, and their prior and concurrent socialization served to mediate and reduce the impact of their TGfU-PETE. Consequently, neither PT was able to deliver the full version of TGfU during the internship. Rather, Emily, the teaching-oriented PT, delivered a watered-down version of the model and Kenny, the coaching-oriented PT took a cafeteria approach to the model.

The PTs’ misconceptions of TGfU and their struggles with the model’s pedagogies were similar to those noted in the limited amount of prior research in this area (Curtner-Smith et al., 2007; McNeill et al., 2004; Peters & Shuck, 2009; Randall, 2003). Both PTs were rigid in their thinking and lacked flexibility, valued technical expertise over tactical understanding, and, following Chandler and Mitchell (1990), there was a hint within Kenny’s later lessons of using small-sided game play as a managerial tool rather than an instructional medium. Further, both PTs had difficulties using indirect styles of teaching, focused on their mastery of more direct pedagogies and perceived these as being oppositional to TGfU, worried that their students would not be able to understand tactics and strategies, and found teaching within small-sided games problematic.

The socialization agents which shaped their initial responses to TGfU were also similar to past research (e.g., Curtner-Smith et al., 2008). Both PTs were primarily socialized into PE by a combination of their involvement in sport and their experiences of the subject as students. The fact that this socialization was by and large conservative for Emily and extremely conservative for Kenny led to Emily's conservative teaching orientation and Kenny's moderate coaching orientation.

The majority of factors which further shaped the PTs' delivery of TGfU during the internship had also been observed in previous research. These included facilities and equipment, cooperating teachers, students and class size, and curricular disruptions. One new and, in this case, negative influence on PTs' ability to deliver TGfU effectively was time and effort put into coaching extracurricular sport.

Assuming the results of this study transfer to other PTs and programs, its implications for TGfU-PETE can be divided into those concerned with recruitment and selection of PTs and those concerned with training PTs to use TGfU during methods courses, EFEs, and the culminating teaching internship. In line with previous research and commentary (Curtner-Smith, in press), the study implies that PETE faculty have more chance of "selling" TGfU to PTs with teaching orientations than those with coaching orientations. Given that the potential pool of teaching-oriented recruits is relatively small in the United States, as well as identifying PTs with this background, PETE faculty also need to consider strategies that might help them sell the model to PTs with moderate coaching orientations who can be turned. The most obvious of these might be emphasizing the origins and connections of TGfU in and with "real" sport and the potential to decrease managerial issues by increasing the ratio of instructional game play to skill practice. Overtly contrasting the effectiveness of the pedagogies employed in TGfU and MA

teaching in terms of instruction, relevance, and management, as has been done with some success by those training PTs to use the SE curriculum model (Curtner-Smith), might also be of use.

The study also suggests that PETE faculty consider giving priority to a number of issues when designing their TGfU-PETE packages and seeking internship placements. The first of these might be debunking the idea that foundational and TGfU pedagogies are oppositional and incompatible. A second should be the search for decent school environments in which interns can practice the model which may necessitate vetting potential cooperating teachers and training them to use the TGfU model during in-service sessions.

As the PTs in the study noted and as has been suggested for other curricular models (Curtner-Smith, in press), PETE faculty also need to include a series of graded EFEs so that PTs begin teaching the model in relatively controlled, simple, and safe environments (e.g., peer teaching, teaching small classes of students) and gradually progress to teaching in more complex and realistic contexts. In the current study, it appeared that too little time was spent on practicing the model prior to the internship and that the jump from the one EFE in which PTs taught TGfU to teaching the model to large classes within the internship was too great.

The study also highlights the need to prioritize helping PTs to acquire the skills to teach within small-sided games, particularly asking questions about tactics and strategies. Strategies that could be employed to achieve this goal include faculty modeling and requiring PTs to study expert TGfU teachers (live and on film), participate in TGfU units as students, and engage in specific practice with feedback. Finally, the study suggests that faculty focus on aiding PTs to identify tactical problems and issues that students have within game play. It may be that this can also be achieved through modeling and practice. Conversely, it may be that an increase in the

number of courses aimed at improving PTs' pedagogical content and pedagogical content knowledge is necessary.

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